

Soviets Denounce Story of Yurchenko's Affair

By MAURA DOLAN and MICHAEL WINES, *Times Staff Writers*

MONTREAL—The Soviet Consulate on Sunday denounced as "dirty lies" aimed at spoiling Soviet-Canadian relations a report that KGB officer Vitaly Yurchenko secretly met with a Soviet diplomat's wife here last month and begged her to defect to the United States.

The Los Angeles Times report, which said the CIA brought Yurchenko to a meeting with Valentina Yereskovsky, the wife of the Soviet consul general, was an insult "to all Soviet women who stay abroad with their diplomat husbands," the statement said.

"It is an outrageous provocation because it's aimed at drawing Canada into an anti-Soviet campaign in order to spoil good Soviet-Canadian relations," the statement said.

Yurchenko, who had been in CIA hands since he sought American asylum in August, became depressed after Yereskovsky spurned him at the meeting and soon decided to return to Soviet hands, the report quoted Administration sources as saying.

Called a Blunder

The sources described the Montreal meeting as one of many CIA blunders in the handling of Yurchenko, who the CIA said Friday had been the KGB's No. 2 official for North American espionage.

The CIA would not comment on the report.

In a Sunday telephone interview, Consul General Alexander S. Yereskovsky curtly rejected reports of his wife's seven-year love affair with Yurchenko. "My wife stays with me for five years, and the statement was just an outrageous dirty lie," he said angrily, then hung up.

In cosmopolitan Montreal, the press has had a field day with what is being dubbed the "Canadian connection," and residents of the Yereskovskys' stylish 16th-floor mid-town apartment were not answering the door.

However, a next-door neighbor said he saw the Yereskovskys together Sunday and described Valentina Yereskovsky as "upset and drawn" and her husband as "red-faced." The two reportedly attended a Soviet reception that

day.

The neighbor, 62-year-old writer and film producer Jean Boisvert, described the Yereskovskys as a stylish couple in their early 40s, both of whom have a fondness for American-cut clothes and speak good, although accented, English. Alexander Yereskovsky is a tall, dark and mustachioed man with a football player's build, and his wife is a slightly plump, "very attractive" ash blonde who wears designer glasses.

Boisvert described the Yereskovskys as a friendly, outgoing couple who indulged in such gestures as giving their doormen tickets to Soviet hockey games but who rarely discussed political matters.

"They take long walks arm-in-arm on weekends," he said. "They wear sporty, trendy clothes, leather jackets, and they are always together."

Whereabouts Uncertain

American sources had said Valentina Yereskovsky was recalled to Moscow in the wake of the Yurchenko revelations. A Canadian official said Yurchenko's reported mistress was believed to have left Canada on Thursday. Administration sources said that she is believed to have been ordered back to Moscow but may not have left yet.

A consulate official, speaking through an intercom, denied that she had been recalled.

In related comments, Secretary of State George P. Shultz on Sunday repeated the Administration's belief that Yurchenko was a genuine Russian defector and not a Soviet double agent assigned to embarrass the White House before this month's summit meeting in Geneva.

Speaking on the CBS program "Face the Nation," Shultz acknowledged that the Soviet Union gained wide publicity from Yurchenko's return but said he believes the KGB officer genuinely "defected and, for some reason or another, changed his mind."

Maura Dolan reported from Montreal and Michael Wines from Washington.